



Renewable energy is focus of New Science on Wheels programs offered by Bradbury Science Museum

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Los Alamos National Laboratory is taking science on the road to area schools

LOS ALAMOS, New Mexico, September 23, 2010—Los Alamos National Laboratory's Bradbury Science Museum Science on Wheels educational program is offering new, renewable energy-related workshops during the 2010-11 school year. The classes are designed to generate interest in science and renewable energy by students at schools throughout Northern New Mexico.

Beginning in October, the museum's science educators will offer four Science on Wheels workshops on Energy Explorations, Solar Energy, Wind Energy, and Fuel Cells. They are geared toward students in fourth through eighth grades, are hands-on and engaging, and give kids more exposure to and understanding of types of renewable energy.

The classes are not only timely, but also reflect some of the research done at LANL. Science on Wheels' first school visit this fall will be on October 4 at Peñasco.

The main goals of Science on Wheels are to interest children in science, help develop the critical thinking skills necessary for scientific research, and inspire them to engage in their education. “It’s important for kids to see themselves as scientists,” said Gordon McDonough, science educator at the Bradbury Science Museum. “If they can imagine it, it seems more possible.”

Science on Wheels visits schools within 90 miles of Los Alamos on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Each class is about 50 minutes long, with four to six classes offered per day.

In addition to teaching Northern New Mexico students about different science topics, Science on Wheels also gives the students a better idea of the types of work done at LANL.

Museum staff often collaborate with Los Alamos scientists to find ways to communicate scientific concepts to students. One example is the Wind Energy workshop. Having worked with some of the researchers from the Laboratory Directed Research and Development-funded wind turbine modeling project, museum science educators Elizabeth Martineau and McDonough developed demonstrations and activities for students to learn about efficiently creating wind power. Using a series of small turbine mockups hooked to data loggers, students compete in groups to design the turbine that generates the most electricity.

Another new class, Fuel Cells, was developed with help from Lab fuel cell experts. This class introduces students to the science behind fuel cells and is a supplement for students participating in the Alternative Fuel Cell Challenge—an event cosponsored by LANL. Students will see fuel cell demonstrations, learn how the cells work, perform experiments, and learn about properties of water molecules.

Information about Science on Wheels classes can be found by calling the Bradbury Science Museum at (505) 667-4444.

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